

The Faculty of Music, University of Toronto

SPECIAL EVENTS

CONCERT HALL

EDWARD JOHNSON BUILDING

Thursday, February 6th, 1964

8:30 p.m.

Lenox Quartet

PETER MARSH, *violinist*

PAUL HERSH, *violist*

THEODORA MANTZ, *violinist*

DONALD MCCALL, *cellist*

PROGRAMME

STRING QUARTET IN C MAJOR (Köchel 465)

-

Mozart

Adagio - Allegro

Andante cantabile

Menuetto: Allegretto

Allegro molto

The last of the six quartets of 1782-5 which Mozart dedicated to Haydn is on a larger and more expansive scale than the other five. This is apparent from the inclusion of an Adagio introduction, and from the extraordinary feeling of vastness and mystery which it gives; and it is also seen in the unusually long thematic sections of the following Allegro. Clashes in the part-writing of the Adagio gave the quartet its nickname of "Dissonant" — an absurd title when one knows the sunny sublimities of the work as a whole. It was the composer Sarti who, in Mozart's lifetime, and apparently without malice, criticized the musical grammar of this Adagio in a pamphlet entitled "Critical observations on a Quartet by Mozart." Much ink was later spilt by 19th-century writers over those troublesome dissonances. The passage may be easily explained, but the point is not its grammar but its emotional effect — which seems to be to indicate from the outset the scope of the work.

The main theme of the Allegro shows, like the opening of the famous G minor Quintet for strings, the expressiveness which Mozart can derive from the patter accompaniments of opera buffa which were always so much a part of his musical vocabulary. The piece has a finely worked reprise with new imitations, and, as so often with Mozart, a new chromatic tinge to the themes.

The expressive core of the Quartet is the beautiful Andante (Mozart added "cantabile" as an afterthought). One should note the little upbeat motive which is so extensively used (mostly in imitation between the instruments) in linking sections, in showing changes of direction in the music, and — once, in the coda — as a sotto-voce background to a completely new melody of tremendous breadth. When asked what he considered the most beautiful sound in music, Mozart is said to have replied: "No sound at all." Apparently what he meant was that a well-placed moment of silence in a piece of music is often more expressive than a screaming profusion of notes; and the truth of this is borne out again and again in his own slow movements. The present one provides some incredibly poised moments of this kind.

The Minuet, broadly conceived and somewhat faster than usual, almost suggests a Schubert scherzo in its manly zest. The exhilarating forte repetition of the cadence-theme is a Schubertian gesture. The trio is in the minor: its theme is like a dialogue between first violin and cello; in the restatement, their roles are reversed, and the cello dominates.

The concluding movement is an Allegro of great vivacity and humor. As in so many Mozart finales, the spirit of Haydn springs to mind. Notable features, especially for later adventures to which they give rise, are the surprising harmonic excursions of the second theme and the witty cadence-tune of the same section.

STRING QUARTET No. 2 - - - - Elliott Carter

Introduction - Allegro fantastico - viola cadenza -
Presto scherzando - cello cadenza - Andante espressivo -
first-violin cadenza - Allegro - Conclusion.

Elliott Carter's Second Quartet was composed in 1959 and commissioned by the Stanley Quartet. Its first New York performance took place in March the following year, and shortly thereafter it was awarded a Pulitzer Prize.

Where the First Quartet (1951) eschewed formal division into movements, the Second deliberately assumes the basic tempo-changes and mood-contrasts of the classical four-movement quartet, asserting in this way (as also in its comparatively restricted range of sonorous devices in the instruments) its lineal connection with Haydn and Mozart.

Where the music shows newness is in its conception of the quartet as a coinciding of four individual characters, each quite distinct from the others. The counterpoint — as in most of Mr. Carter's works — is differential rather than imitative: a more ancient, more basic type of counterpoint, by the way, but one Western ears have become less and less used to hearing since the 15th century. Another association with late-medieval music is Mr. Carter's use of a variant of the old "hocket" technique, in which a theme is expressed cooperatively by passing note by note through various instruments rather than appearing complete in any one instrument.

The character assigned to each of the four players (and the composer suggests, without insisting, that they sit rather farther apart than usual on the stage to make their individualities stand out more) is as follows. The first violin part is flighty and *bravura* in style, conveying a fantastic and ever-changeable spirit. The second violin has a rigid, almost percussive, part — one that might easily suggest the guitar and indeed is more than half the time written in *pizzicato* (with a host of fascinating specialized variations of plucked-string tone). The viola's basic *espressivo* role is underlined in its many *glissandi* and *portamenti*. The cello is given a linear part with constant slowing or speeding-up of metre — a "built-in" *rubato* element, as it were.

The tension between these individual roles is especially marked in the introduction and conclusion sections and in the accompanied cadenzas which link the "movements." On the other hand, an *accelerando* (characteristic of many Carter scores), heard just before the conclusion, represents the greatest degree of convergence and conciliation of the four lines.

— INTERMISSION —

STRING QUARTET IN F MAJOR

Ravel

Allegro moderato

Assez vif

Très lent

Vif et agité

Ravel's production of chamber music in so-called "abstract" style is dominated by three works — this Quartet, the Sonata for violin and cello, and the Piano Trio. Of these the Quartet was the earliest and also the most free and flamboyant in conception. Speaking of the Trio, Roland Manuel comments that it "shows a quality of mastery quite different from the frenzied melancholy which . . . animates the Quartet;" and he adds, interestingly: "At the end of his life Ravel once compared the two works by declaring in my presence that without much regret he would exchange the technical knowledge of his mature work for the artless strength revealed in his youthful quartet."

The Quartet dates from 1902-3, when Ravel, at twenty-seven, had just emerged from the Conservatoire composition classes of Gédalge and Fauré. The dedication in fact reads: "A mon cher Maître, Gabriel Fauré". The Quartet, like the Sonatine for piano of two years later, adapted classic form to new thematic procedures and invested it with new colour devices. The thematic procedures are mostly symmetrical mosaic-like patterns of elongation, rather than dynamic developments à la Beethoven. From Fauré, Ravel learned the device of combining first and second themes for climactic effect; and also the technique found in the chamber music of Franck, d'Indy, and Debussy as well, of adapting the first and second themes of the opening movement to new uses in subsequent movements. The new colour devices include exotic melody-formations such as the Dorian and Phrygian modes and the whole-tone scale; the sonorous amplification of melodies in parallel chords; and complex rhythmic schemes such as the combined 3-4 and 6-8 of the scherzo or the quintuple metres of the finale.

Orientalism and even impressionism are words which have been applied to the Quartet — and from the outset the work was widely considered to have been much influenced by Debussy. Certainly here and in the song-cycle *Shéhérazade* of 1902, Ravel comes closer than anywhere else to an affinity with his great contemporary and compatriot. The two men were at this time on quite cordial terms, though they later became less-friendly rivals. Ravel showed Debussy the score of the Quartet, and the latter was entirely enthusiastic, begging the author not to alter one note of his score (Ravel admitted later that despite this advice he made considerable revisions in the opening movement).